

(Mr. Fields, United States)

Now let me address the subject of radiological weapons. My delegation had the honour during 1983 to co-ordinate the work of Group A of the Radiological Weapons Working Group. That Group was entrusted with what has become known as the traditional radiological weapons subject matter. Significant progress was made during this session; however, it was largely procedural in nature. The intensive negotiations held by Mr. Busby and the considerable efforts of others should have produced more substantive gains. We should ask ourselves why this is the case. After all, we have now spent four years in multilateral negotiations on this subject. The prohibitions and other operative provisions are not difficult, nor would they cause major adjustments in the national security posture of any State represented in the Committee.

But a radiological weapons treaty is not, by virtue of these considerations, irrelevant. It is well known that my Government, some three decades ago, invested considerable effort and money in a serious investigation of radiological weapons. And, on one occasion during this period, a senior military commander in the field raised the possibility of laying down barriers of radioactive waste material across the major supply lines of an adversary. These matters were not pursued to the point that radiological weapons were actually developed, produced, or used, and consequently these weapons of mass destruction remain, as some delegations have termed them, "hypothetical". But in the past 30 years, as my delegation has pointed out before, the amount of radioactive material that could be put to weapons use has increased dramatically. Consequently, the United States believes strongly that there are genuine and significant security reasons for prohibiting such use and for negotiating provisions that protect radioactive material against its diversion to banned activities.

Regrettably, conclusion of a radiological weapons treaty remains hostage to a set of complex linkages which are related more to the character of this body than to the substance of the treaty itself. This is a matter of serious concern to my delegation. We must ask ourselves, are we prepared to negotiate limited measures which may fall short of the expectations of some of our members, or will we forever be putting aside the possible in the illusory pursuit of the perfect? The answers to these questions have an impact on the assessment of many Governments, including my own, as to whether this body is in fact an appropriate forum for serious arms-control initiatives.

Let me explain my concern.

My Government is convinced that a treaty prohibiting radiological weapons could be concluded with dispatch. But, at the same time, it appears impossible to negotiate it in the Committee. There are those who take the position that there will never be a radiological weapons treaty submitted to the General Assembly unless there is submitted at the same time a treaty on the prohibition of attacks on nuclear facilities. In a consensus body that position, even if held by only one delegation, is definitive of what is possible.

So what are the chances of success?

We should look at what has become known as Track B. As is well known, with the exception of excluding such things as nuclear-powered warships from consideration, the issues are as yet undefined, and there may be differences of